

Fulbright Story No Aid, Saigon Legislator Says

SAIGON (UPI)—South Vietnamese National Assemblyman Tran Ngoc Chau says Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., did him no good by saying the deputy was an agent for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

"It was very harmful to my nationalist reputation," Chau said in a letter to Fulbright. "A CIA agent has been considered in Vietnam as the most detested enemy, much more than a Communist or any type of criminal."

Fulbright said in Washington last week that President Nguyen Van Thieu's government was persecuting Chau because it wants to hold a court trial to determine if the legislator and a fellow deputy, Hoang Ho, have ties with the Communists.

Assembly Condemns 3

The trial, expected to be held next month, is an outgrowth of a National Assembly action in December to condemn Chau, Ho and Deputy Pham The Truc, now in self-exile in France, for being "tools of communism."

(Fulbright, in telling Chau's story, described the Vietnamese as having "daily contact" with CIA officers, but did not characterize Chau as a CIA agent, an aide to Fulbright said yesterday.

(The Senate Foreign Relations

Committee, headed by Fulbright, will resume its Vietnam hearings Tuesday, centering on the allied pacification program in South Vietnam. The committee quite possibly will again touch on Chau's case at that time.)

Circulated by Friends

The letter was circulated to Saigon news media by Chau's friends. He has been out of the city for weeks.

"It is true," Chau wrote Fulbright, "that I had cooperated with the CIA for many years in developing foundations of present pacification and revolutionary development in my capacity as province chief (mayor of Da Nang) and director of cadres.

"But I have never been a CIA agent," Chau said.

He told Fulbright that if he didn't believe him, he should ask Ambassador Ellsworth C. Bunker. The U.S. Embassy has refused comment on the case, but unofficial sources have confirmed Chau's position.

Chau said previously that the CIA knew about and encouraged his meetings with his brother, Tran Ngoc Hien, 48, a confessed spy for Hanoi, and sought his aid in recruiting Hien as a double agent. Chau said he refused to be a go-between.